Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

NEW Directions

October 25, 2007

Deputy Minister tours ministry offices to answer questions about stewardship

Deputy Ministry Ron Sapsford recently completed his second ministry-wide tour to answer questions employees have about the transition process to stewardship now underway within the MOHLTC.

In early October, the Deputy Minister met with staff in Toronto and held video conferences with staff in Kingston, Hamilton, Thunder Bay and Sudbury. In each session Sapsford presented and answered questions he'd been asked during his earlier July tour, using his answers to demonstrate how the role of the ministry and the work of its employees are both going to change over time with stewardship.

"The overall goal of stewardship is to put the ministry in the position of focusing on developing strategies for the health care system as a whole, as opposed to the program components individually," said Sapsford, during a session in Toronto.

The cost of health care in Ontario consumes 40 per cent of the provincial budget and is on the rise. Sapsford said he's often asked if the transition to stewardship is intended to change that. "Stewardship may not decrease the amount of the budget that health now consumes, but it is intended to ensure we carefully monitor and manage growth."

In response to questions about restructuring, Sapsford stressed that stewardship is not about downsizing or outsourcing. Instead, it is about changing the work the ministry does to be in a better position to perform our stewardship functions.

"As stewards we need to establish overall strategic direction and provincial priorities, develop legislation, monitor and report on the performance of the health system, plan for and establish funding models and levels of funding, and ensure that ministry and system-strategic directions and expectations are fulfilled," he said.

"Stewardship is about focusing on the work that only the ministry can do. And that is to provide advice and guidance to the government of the day about the tens of billions of dollars this province spends annually on health care and the health of Ontarians."

NEW Directions

NEW Directions, published for employees of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care by the Communications and Information Branch, can be read on-line at INFOweb at http://intra.moh.gov.on.ca/.

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Do you have questions about the organizational change?

- Ask your manager
- E-mail your questions or comments to the feedback account at *answerdirections@moh.gov.on.ca*
- Call the feedback line at 1-888-882-0528 or TTY: 1-800-387-5559

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>
> *Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford*

Sapsford is commonly asked about the challenge of changing the ministry's existing workplace culture, which stems from its traditional hierarchical structure and focus on program delivery.

"Quite honestly, I don't have all the answers to this question. It's going to take some time and all of us are going to have to work together to ask and answer the questions that will shape our new way of working," Sapsford said.

"These changes are not going to happen overnight," added Sapsford. "But to maintain the sustainability of Ontario's health system we've got to develop a new culture of working in partnerships and in cross-functional teams across divisions. To be successful, stewardship will require communicating openly across all our divisions as well as within individual work units."

Sapsford discussed some of the ways ministry employees can practice the principles of stewardship. He encouraged employees to begin discussions with their managers about how ministry strategy and policy link to their specific job functions. He also stressed the need to use evidence to make decisions — to find and make use of experts as well as relevant databases or supporting science and to incorporate this information into daily work.

The final question Sapsford addressed during sessions on his fall tour involves how ministry employees can prepare themselves for the changes required by the move to stewardship. "We are working hard to keep all of you well informed and to create opportunities to involve employees in the change process," he said.

He recommended that MOHLTC employees start by familiarizing themselves with the ministry's stewardship competencies. For a detailed explanation of the competencies, he referred staff to the ministry's **Stewardship Competencies Guide**. He also encouraged administrative and support staff to attend learning programs targeted for them that will be launched in the new year.

Other avenues suggested by Sapsford for developing the required skills and competencies to work effectively in a stewardship organization and to stay informed about stewardship include:

- participating in the change and acquiring and improving their command of the competencies by working through the new business model
- attending Stewardship in Action learning and development opportunities such as the Stewardship Awareness Program and the FYI Series
- taking advantage of the wide selection of career support programs offered by the Centre For Leadership and Learning and Ontario Shared Services
- reading *NEW Directions* weekly and visiting the A New Direction section of INFOweb, which contains numerous stewardship materials and resources. ■

Access the Deputy Minister's fall tour video presentation and speech

Watch a video conference of Deputy Minister Sapsford's fall tour and read his speech on INFOweb in the A New Direction **Deputy Minister Tour** section.

Register here for all *Stewardship in Action* **Learning and Development programs**

See updates to the October/November 2007 schedule!

Ontario